

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ASPIRA

Nail Piece

Aspira was established in 1961 in New York City by a group of Puerto Rican professionals under the able leadership of Dr. Antonia Pantoja. These professionals recognized the need for the development of Puerto Rican leaders who were based in the mainland community. Aspira is now the oldest and largest educational agency in the United States serving the needs of Puerto Ricans and hispanic youth.

In 1968 Aspira expanded to include offices in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and Aspira of America came into existence as a national organization to bring together the common elements of leadership, to articulate the educational needs of our Puerto Rican youth to the Hispanic community and to the public and private sector of the nation at large. The national office proposed to do this in three main ways: analysis and dissemination of research information that would clarify the educational situation of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics to their own communities and to the rest of the nation; through the delivery on an on-going basis of relevant technical services in professional training, management, fund raising, proposal writing and other allied needs which would constantly improve the Affiliates capacities to maintain and extend the quality of their services; through the expansion of Aspiras' capacity to plan for new services by tapping new national funding sources both from the public and private sector. In 1977 the affiliates were given greater autonomy through the Terms of Association adopted that year. Moreover, the end of fiscal year 1978-79 marked the growing presence of Aspira of America in this nation's capital with the opening of ACEE--the Aspira Center for Educational Equity, and in 1980 Aspira opened an affiliate in Miami, Florida, to respond to the needs of Hispanic youth in that area.

Below are the names of National Executive Directors, National Board's Chairpersons, and the corresponding dates of office.

Year	National Executive Director	Chairperson of the Board
1969-1971	Luis Nunez	Gilbert Ortiz, M.D.
1971-1972	Luis Nunez	Gilbert Ortiz, M.D.
	Luis Alvarez	Gilbert Ortiz, M.D.
1972-1975	Luis Alvarez	Gilbert Ortiz, M.D.
1975-1976	Luis Alvarez	Francisco Trilla, M.D.
	Mario A. Anglada	Carmen Escoda de Beal
1976-1977	Mario A. Anglada	Carmen Escoda de Beal
1977-1979	Mario A. Anglada	Jose Morales
1979-1980	Mario A. Anglada	Maria Santiago Mercado
1980-1981	Mario A. Anglada	Carmen Ana Culpeper
1981-1982	Mario A. Anglada	Maria Santiago Mercado
1982-1983	Mario A. Anglada	Maria Santiago Mercado

*Core
program
value*

Advocacy

technical assistance

RESEARCH AND POLICY-MAKING

From the beginning Aspira has shown great interest in the areas of research and policy-making. An initial attempt was made in research with the publication of Social Factors and Educational Attainment of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1970. Published in 1976 this study used census statistics to identify and analyze the factors in the schooling process that create delays in completion, limits attainment, fosters dropping out and reduces the chances for higher education among Puerto Ricans students in the United States.

CONSENT DECREE - Aspira versus The Board of Education

From the beginning, Aspira has attempted to improve the quality of education provided by the Board of Education. The agency has been represented on many committees and task forces which address educational issues affecting Puerto Ricans on local, city, state, and federal levels. Through these committees Aspira has attempted to make the educational system more responsive to the cultural and linguistic modes of Puerto Rican and other Hispanic children. By the early 1970's, however, it was evident to Aspira that its efforts had resulted in little change for the substantive majority of the children of this community. Bilingual education methods were used in teaching only a very small number of them. Because of continuous opposition to bilingual education legislative in N.Y. State there was little hope that bilingual education could be obtained through legislative action. After much research, Aspira concluded that court action was necessary and decided to sue the New York City Board of Education. Discussions and preparations began in 1971. The lawsuit, Aspira Versus Board of Education of the City of NY was subsequently filed on September 20, 1972. However, it was not until August 29, 1974, three years later, that the landmark agreement, legally termed "consent decree" was signed by the parties and approved by the court. The bilingual education suit has made it possible for over 60,000 Hispanic and other children to benefit from a bilingual education.

ASPIRA CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Created in 1979 ACEE served as a linking agent between researchers concerned with Hispanic education, decision-makers who influence policy, and advocate for the Hispanic student. ACEE's four main objectives were:

1. To contribute to knowledge about Hispanic education through research and development.

2. To foster participation of Hispanics in education research through fellowships, internships and net-working;
3. To disseminate information about Hispanic education to policy makers and practitioners;
4. To influence policy development through advocacy based on knowledge development.

"Cutting Edge" a quarterly newsletter carrying information on research and policy issues of special concern to Hispanics was one of the initial projects of ACEE, its first issue appearing in the winter 1979-80.

Due to budget cuts and economics barriers the ACEE Aspira Center for Educational Equity was phased out during late 1982.

METAS

Metas, a scholarly journal featuring findings on educational issues affecting the Puerto Rican, Hispanic communities and other minority groups in the United States began its publication on the fall of 1979 on a three issues per-year basis. Individual research findings by Hispanics or persons interested in the Hispanic community are being published in Metas.

Among the topics included in Metas are the following studies:

- "Hispanics and Desegregation: Summary of Aspira's Study on Hispanic Segregation Trends in U.S. School Districts", by Abidin Noboa. This study, appearing in the Fall 1980, issue examined within-district segregation of Hispanics in public elementary and secondary school districts between 1968 and 1976. The study was directed at segregation in the nation as a whole, in regions, and in school districts having large Hispanic enrollment. The apparent effects of segregation on a variety of school practices were examined as well as the relationship between segregation of Hispanics and segregation of blacks.
- "An Analysis of Hispanic Doctoral Recipients from U.S. Universities (1900-1973) with Special Emphasis on Puerto Rican Doctorates", by Abidin Noboa Rios. This investigation attempts to 1) construct past and present intends in Hispanic doctoral attainment within and across Hispanic ethnic groups; 2) identify socio-economic, interpersonal and schooling backgrounds of Hispanic doctoral recipients; and 3) compare findings with national sample surveys of doctorates and studies of doctoral

attainment among minorities to determine important variables toward success in graduate school among a rapidly growing racial/ethnic group in America.

In 1980 the National Institute of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, at Washington granted Aspira of Pennsylvania funds to continue a three-year study on Puerto Rican high school dropouts.

A second study sponsored by the Tinker Foundation and commissioned by Aspira of America was conducted by the Aspira Research Project of Aspira of America of Pennsylvania in 1981. The study was designed by Aspira of America, Inc. as a pilot in order to assess what has happened to former Aspirantes and how they view the impact that Aspira has had in their lives.

In April of 1982 Aspira of America secured a grant from the Public Health Service Division of H.R.A. to implement a pilot study enabling Aspira to collect and interpret data which will provide an overview of the Aspira National Health Careers Program performance and impact.

NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Aspira has depended both on federal aid and corporate and foundation grants. For example, the Federal, State and City governments have generously provided fund to Aspira for our Aspirantes Helping Peers Program: "Proyecto Entre Iguales", Talent Search Program, and Health Careers Program.

National Aspira Scholarship Program

The National Aspira Scholarship Program began in fiscal year 1973-74 and ended in 1980. The program provided loans ranging from \$150. to \$1,500. and were given on the basis of personal or family financial need, difficulty in meeting school costs, good academic background or potential, and involvement in community-related activities.

National Programs Sponsored by LEAA

Since fiscal year 1977-78, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration has sponsored three national programs, "Proyecto Amanece" (October 1977-December 1980); "Proyecto Armonia" (November 1978-February 1980); and "Entre Iguales" (October 1980 to December 1982). The first two were aimed to deter youth crime in several cities by involving young people in a variety of positive activities. As a peer counseling program, the third aim

had been: to train youth to reach out to their juvenile peers who are doing poorly in school or who have dropped out, and to have the Aspirantes serve as link between these troubled youth and their schools, as well as community youth service organizations. These nationally coordinated programs have been designed to strengthen the Aspira club networks in the Aspira Associates.

Aspira Business Careers Program - 2000

Funded by Aetna Life and Casualty Foundation in July, 1982 and implemented through Aspira of Illinois, the Aspira Business Careers Program seeks to address the need for Puerto Rican and other Hispanics pursuing careers in business. This program provides a structured curriculum (counseling, career workshops) which encourages students to pursue business careers ranging from accounting to business management.

Aspira of New Jersey also provides a program with similar goals of increasing the number of Hispanics pursuing business careers.

National Health Careers Program - 1977-82

The Health Careers Program began in 1970 as a local New York program turning national the following year and continuing on this basis to the present. The National Health Careers Program focuses on recruitment, career and personal counseling, retention and placement of students interested in the health professions. Funding has been received from the Public Health Services Division, HEW, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

During the 1981-82 year, the Aspira R.W.J. program serviced 549 students. One hundred and eleven (111) students submitted applications to health professional schools, of which 74 were accepted into a health professional school.

In 1977-78 sixty eight (68) students were placed by Aspira's R.W.J. into health professional schools. Follow-up was conducted on these students in 1982. Of the 68 students placed, 43 students graduated from a health professional school in June, 1982. An additional 12 students will be graduated in June, 1983. This represents 80 percent of the students placed by Aspira in 1977 in medical schools.

The Aspira National Health Careers Program continues to be a vital and very much needed program for the Hispanic community. At present, Aspira's one of the few which successfully addresses the need for more Hispanic health professionals.

Aspira's placements represent 40-45 percent of all Puerto Rican students in health professional schools in the nation.

GENERAL

Through the Aspira Clubs in public high schools and Aspira Centers in Puerto Rican neighborhoods, youngsters become involved in the "Aspira Process", a network of services and activities that foster aspiration, self-confidence, the ability and determination to pursue higher education, and a lasting commitment to help others in their community. Students receive academic and personal counseling, college information, tutorial assistance, vocational guidance, and the chance to engage in activities promoting leadership development. Since its founding in 1961, Aspira has placed more than 37,000 young people in colleges and universities.

Aspira's record of 21 years speaks of success. That success, however, we share with others; first of all with those in the Puerto Rican and Hispanic community who have participated directly in our programs and secondly, with society in general who has benefited from the input of our Aspirantes. Having gone through the "Aspira Process", today they make their contribution not only to the economy but to the areas of their expertise as doctors, lawyers, teachers, social workers, artists, and engineers. Thus, we are rightfully filled with pride and satisfaction whenever Aspirantes of past years get back to us to express their gratitude and support.

"Seeing the youthful faces in the Report brought back memories when we were students and Aspira was very young....As time passes, Aspira of America's achievements have filled all of us who passed through your doors with great pride".

Joseph M. Aguayo
Vice President/Development
Independent Sector

Despite the current economic situation in the nation, Aspira continues to provide personal counseling, leadership skills, college placement, tutorial assistance and financial aid in one form or another to Hispanic and other minority youth. For example, last year alone Aspira was responsible for the placement of 2,132 students into colleges and universities and serviced 10,079 youngsters.

While government grants are dwindling, Aspira is striving to broaden the base of private support by approaching banks, unions, insurance companies, corporations and foundations.

Moreover, during these times of severe budget cuts, which have affected Aspira as well as many other community service organizations, we have had to explore other avenues for raising funds to enable Aspira to continue serving our youth with the same intensity that we have manifested in the last 21 years.

To this end, Aspira has initiated two new means of generating monies to support its efforts:

1. ARAWAK ENTERPRISES, INC.

Aspira of America is the sole shareholder of Arawak Enterprises, Inc. a for-profit corporation, all of whose profits after expenses are distributed amongst the Associates to use in the development and continuation of programs.

2. CARIBBEAN CRUISE

Aspira of America, is currently sponsoring a seven-day fund-raising caribbean cruise. In a similar fashion to Arawak Enterprises, Inc. all profits derived from this initiative are to be used for the continuation of the Aspira programs.

FUTURE EXPANSION

Aspira of America has recognized the need for further expansion of its Associates. Two sites which have been identified as potential locations are: Pontiac, Michigan and Springfield, Massachusetts. The needs and concerns of these communities are presently being investigated as well as the ability of each community to secure initial funds for themselves. This process of assessment is being conducted in a thorough and serious manner in order to assure careful planning and development in response of the needs of these communities.